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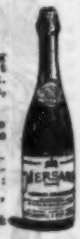

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SNUBBING A DECADENT.

He. "A—DON'T YOU FIND EXISTENCE AN AWFUL BORE?"
She. "A—WELL, SOME PEOPLE'S EXISTENCE—MOST DECIDEDLY!"

YULE-TIDE—OLD AND NEW.

AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CENTURY.

AND they made merry in the good old fashion. The pictures on the walls were covered with holly and mistletoe. They had come from British woods. Then the tables groaned with Christmas cheer. The baron of beef was flanked with plum-pudding and mince-pies. There never was a more jovial crew. The compliments of the season were passed round, and the Christmas Waits, singing their Christmas carols, were entertained right royally. For was it not a time of peace and good will? Then there was a mighty laugh. A huge joke had been perpetrated. Grandfather had been asleep, and he was telling the youngsters, who had been playing a round game, the character of his dream.

"I give you my word it is true," said the old man. "Yes, I actually forgot it was Christmas!"

"But it was only in your dreams, Grandpapa," urged one of his descendants.

"Yes, but that was bad enough," cried the old man in a tone of self-reproach, "fancy forgetting Christmas—even in one's dreams! Everything seems changing nowadays!"

But the Grandfather was wrong—the Christmas bills were unchangeable. And ever will be!

AT THE END OF THE CENTURY.

And certainly it was dull enough in all conscience. Nowadays everything is dull. Although it was towards the end of December, the room was decorated with summer flowers. They had come from Algeria. Then the side-table was spread with a *recherché* repast, for they were all going to dine *à la Russe*. But the guests were sad and thoroughly bored. They had sent a policeman after the itinerant street-musicians, with the desired result. Inside and outside silence reigned triumphant. Was it not a time for "moving on" and threatening "six weeks without the option of a fine"?

Then there was a deep groan. A young man—somebody's Grandson—suggested a round game. At first the suggestion was received with derision.

"You can't get up a Missing Word Competition," said one. "No, my Grandson, you can't."

"Can't I?" said the youngster, who had been called 'Grandson.' "Can't I? Look here, I will write out a Word, and I will bet you none of you will guess it."

And "Grandson" wrote out a Word on a piece of paper, and sealed it in a packet. Then he called out the sentence, "The present season of the year is known as——"

Then they all tried to guess it. Some one said "unfavourable," another "pleasant," a third "dreary," and a fourth "troublesome."

But they all were wrong.

At last the sealed-up packet was produced, and opened. For the first time there was a smile when the Word was known.

"Who would have thought of it?" was the cry.

The word chosen was "Christmas."

"Fancy anyone remembering Christmas! Even for a Missing Word Competition! Everything seems changing nowadays!"

But the Grandson was wrong—his Christmas bills were unchangeable. And ever will be!

"ART COMPETITIONS."

"Since these competitions were started, the public had been educated in artistic matters, and their judgment was almost equal to that of the members of the Royal Academy."—*Mr. Poland's Speech in the "Missing Word" case.*

MR. POLAND said, at Bow Street,
Choosing pictures thus imparts
Judgment good as that of those treat-
Ed as foremost in the arts.

Hitherto each paid his shilling
At the House of Burling*ton*,
Gazed at pictures, feeble, thrilling,
Bad or good, and wandered on—

Stared with awe-struck admiration
At "the Picture of the Year,"
Gained artistic education
In a stuffy atmosphere.

Then all changed; he paid his shilling
And he sent his coupon in
To a weekly paper, willing
To discriminate the tin;

And be wisely praised or blamed, yet
He knew nothing of design,
The BRIDGE of Bow Street claimed yet
One more shilling as a fine.

Oh, rejoice, Academicians!
Learned BRIDGE knew what to do;
Artisans or mechanicians
Might have grown as wise as you.

Which would sadden any just man,
And might make an angel weep—
DICKSEE distanced by a dustman,
STOREY staggered by a sweep!

BOUGHTON beaten by a baker,
Housemaids humbling helpless HOOK;
STONE surpassed by sausage-maker,
COOPER conquered by a cook!

CROWE or CROPTS crushed by a cow-boy,
MILLAIS made by milkmen mad,
PETTIE plucked by any ploughboy,
LEIGHTON licked by butcher's lad!

It effected all you care for,
But Sir JOHN has pulled you through;
Bold Bow-Street's Beak is, therefore,
No Bridge of Sighs for you

"A NOTE ON THE APPRECIATION OF GOLD."—Send a five-pound note (verified by the Bank of England) to our office, and we will undertake to get it changed *immediately*, and thereupon to hand over to the Bearer, in exchange for the note, *two golden sovereigns, and one golden half-sovereign, ready cash.* This will show what is *our* appreciation of gold.

THE SKELETON AT THE FEAST.

"I confess it does seem to me that certain decisions made by a competent tribunal have rendered it extremely doubtful whether there is a single one of the 670 gentlemen who now compose the House of Commons, who might not find himself, by some accident, unseated, if a full investigation were made into everything that had taken place in his constituency, say, during the ten years preceding his candidature."—*Mr. Balfour at Sheffield.*

M.P. (of any Party you please), loquitur :—

Phew! It 's all very fine, when you gather to dine,
And to blow off the steam, while you blow off your 'baccа,
(As the farmers of Aylesbury did, when their wine
Was sweetened with "news from the Straits of Malacca");
But things are much changed since the voters of Bucks
Flushed red with loud fun at the phrases of Dizzy,
And M.P.'s are dreadfully down on their lucks,
Since Balfour's confounded "tribunals" got busy.

What precious stiff posers to loyal Primrosers
Are offered by Rochester, Walsall, and Hexham!

SUCH A HAPPY FAMILY PARTY—AT CHRISTMAS.

Uncle John (losing his money and his temper). "NOW, JANE, DO ME A FAVOUR FOR ONCE, AND DON'T SHOW YOUR HAND!"
Aunt Jane (whose best Cards her Partner has invariably over-trumped). "I CAN'T HELP IT. YOU SHOW YOUR HANDS, AND I'M SURE THEY'RE NO BEAUTIES!"
[After this, there's a prospect of a very pleasant evening.

Platform perorators, post-prandial glosers,
Must find many points to perplex 'em and vex 'em.
It bothers a spouter who freely would flourish
Coat-tails and mixed tropes at political dinners,
When doubts of his safety he's driven to nourish,
Through publicans rash and (electoral) sinners.

Good lack, and good gracious! One may be veracious,
And look with disgust upon bribes and forced bias,
Yet owing to "Agents" more hot than sagacious,
Appear as *Autolycus-cum-*ANANIAS.
One might just as soon be a Man-in-the-Moon,
Or hark back at once to the style of Old Sarum.
That Act (Corrupt Practices) may be a boon,
But the way they apply it seems most harum-scarum.

Should a would-be M.P. ask old ladies to tea,
Or invite male supporters to crumpets or cricket;
Should a snug Party Club prove a trifle too free,
Or give an equivocal "treat," or hat-ticket;
A seven years' nursing of Slopville-on-Slime,
A well-fought Election and Glorious Victory
(Crowed o'er by proud Party prints at the time)
May—lose you your Seat. It does seem contradictory.

Of course, my good friends, one would not say a word,
Against England's glory—Electoral Purity!
Suspect *me* of slighting that boon? Too absurd!
But what good's a Seat without *some* small security.
To fight tooth and nail, land a win, and then fail
Along of dishon—I mean o'er-zealous "Agents"—
Well, well, I don't wish at our Judges to rail,
But—putting it plainly—I fear it won't pay, gents

'Tis hard to attend a political feast,
And strut like a peacock, and crow like a bantam,
Yet feel at one's back, like a blast from the east,
A be-robed and be-wigged and blood-curdling law phantom.
Stentorian cheers, and uproarious hear-hears,
Though welcome, won't banish the sense of "wet-blanket"
(That's INGOLDSBY's rhyme), when Petition-bred fears
Conjure up a grim Skelston (Judge) at the Banquet!

THE SHORTEST DAY.

SHORT verse
We need,
Most terse
Indeed,
That it—
This lay—
May fit
This day.
Short sight
Of sun,
Long night,
Begun
At four,
Sunshine
Once more
At nine.

A. M.
Meets eyes
Of them
Who rise
If no
Fog hide—
Then woe
Betide;
The day
That ought
To stay
So short
A space
Can't show
Its face
Below.

But when
It goes,
Why then
One knows
New Year
Will soon
Be here—
Then June,
So bright!
So sweet!
So light!
We'll greet
The day
That's long
With gay,
Glad song—

Excessively long-footed verse will undoubtedly characterise what we say,
For LONGFELLOW's longest lines skip along when we've long longed for the Longest Day.

(*Signed*) TOUCHSTONE.

MILITARY MOTTO FOR THE NEW SOUTH LONDON OPHTHALMIC HOSPITAL OPENED LAST FRIDAY BY THE DUKE OF YORK.—"Eyes right!"

THE CHOICE OF BOOKS.

To various opinions the quidnunes give voice,
But the best "choice of books" means—the books of your choice.

THE LAST WORD.

(A Domestic Drama of the Day before Yesterday.)

Scene.—*The Breakfast Room at Linoleum Lodge, the suburban residence of* Samuel Stodgeford, Esq. Mr. *and* Mrs. Stodgeford, *their son* Parmenas, *and daughters* Pompilia *and* Priscilla, *discovered at breakfast.*

Mr. Stodgeford. We shall probably get it by the second post, and though the delay is—ah—to some extent, annoying, we must not allow ourselves to be unduly impatient. Personally, I regard these—ah—weekly competitions as chiefly valuable in providing an innocent form of domestic recreation, and an interesting example of the—ah—value of words.

Parmenas S. The value of *one* word, I should say, Father. Last week, as there were very few who guessed right, it amounted to a considerable sum.

Mr. S. That is a stimulant to ingenuity, no doubt, with some minds, but let us put that aside. We feel some natural curiosity to know whether we have selected the missing adjective, and I see no reason myself to doubt that our united efforts will this time be crowned with success.

Pompilia. It is almost impossible that it won't be *one* of the two hundred and fifty we sent in.

Parmenas. I drew up a list of synonyms which, I flatter myself, was practically exhaustive.

Priscilla. I dreamt I heard a voice saying quite clearly in my ear, "Nonsensical! nonsensical!"—like that—so I sent it in the first thing next morning.

Mr. S. These—ah—supernatural monitions are not vouchsafed to us without a purpose. It *may* be "nonsensical."

Mrs. S. The only two words *I* could think of were, "absurd" and "idiotic," and I'm afraid they haven't much chance.

Mr. S. I wouldn't say that, Sophronia. It is not always the most appropriate epithet that—let me run over the paragraph again—where is last week's paper? Ah, I have it. (*He procures it and reads with unction.*) "The lark, as has been frequently observed by the poets, is in the habit of ascending to high altitudes in the exercise of his vocal functions. Scientific meteorologists, it is true, do not consider that there is any immediate danger of a descent of the sky, but many bird-catchers of experience are of opinion that, should such a contingency happen, the number of these feathered songsters included in the catastrophe would, in all probability, be simply ——" It might be "idiotic," of course, but I fancy "incalculable" or "appalling" would be nearer the mark.

Parmenas. Too obvious, *I* should say. If you had adopted a few more of the words I got from *Roget's Thesaurus*, we should have been safer. Sending in a word like "disgusting" was sheer waste of one-and-twopence! And as for Pompilia, with her synonyms to "sensational," and Priscilla, with her rubbishy superstition, depend upon it, *they're* no good!

"I sold my Chanst to the Butcher-boy!"

Pompilia. You think you know so much, because you've been to London University—but *we've* been to a High School; so we're not absolute *idiots*, Parmenas!

Priscilla. And I'm sure people have dreamt which horse was going to win a race over and over again!

Mr. S. Come, come, let us have none of these unseemly disputes! And, when you compare a literary competition with—ah—a mere gambling transaction, Priscilla, you do a grave injustice to us all. You forget that we have, all of us, worked hard for success; we have given our whole thoughts and time to the subject. I have stayed at home from the office day after day. Your mother has had no leisure for the cares of the household; your brother has suspended his studies for his approaching examination, and your elder sister her labours at the East End—on purpose to devote our combined intelligence to the subject. And are we to be told that we are no better than the brainless multitude who speculate on horse-racing! I am not *angry*, my child, I am only—(*Enter* Robert, *the* Page, *with a paper in a postal wrapper.*) *Tiddler's Miscellany*—ha, at last! Why didn't you bring it up before, Sir? You must have known it was important!

Robert. Please, Sir, it's on'y just come, Sir.

Mr. S. (*snatching the paper from him, and tearing it open; the other members of the family crowd round excitedly*). Now we shall see! Where's the place? Confound the thing! Why can't they print the result in a—— (*His face falls.*) What are you waiting for, Sir? Leave the room!

[*To* Robert, *who has lingered about the sideboard.*

Robert. Beg pardon, Sir, but would you mind reading out the Word—'cause I'm——

The Family. Read the Word, Papa, do!

Mr. S. (*keeping the Journal*). All in good time. (*Addressing* Robert.) Am I to understand, Sir, that you have actually had the presumption to engage in this competition?—an uneducated young rascal like you!

Robert. I didn't mean no harm, Sir, I sent in nothink—it was on'y a lark, Sir!

The Family (*dancing with suspense*). Oh, never mind Robert now, Father—do read out the Word!

Mr. S. (*ignoring their anxiety*). If you sent in nothing, Sir, so much the better. But, in case you should be tempted to such a piece of infatuation in future, let me tell you this by way of—ah—warning. I and my family, have, with every advantage that superior education and abilities can bestow, sent in, after prolonged and careful deliberation, no less than two hundred and fifty separate solutions, and not a single one of these solutions, Sir, proves to be the correct one!

The Family (*collapsing on the nearest chairs*). Oh, it can't be true—one of them *must* be right!

Mr. S. Unfortunately, they are not. I will read you the sentence as completed. (*Reads.*) "Should such a contingency happen, the number of these feathered songsters included in the catastrophe would, in all probability, be simply—ah—*nought!*" Now I venture to assert that nothing short of—ah—absolute genius could possibly—— (*To* Robert.) What do you mean by interrupting me, Sir?

Robert. Please, Sir, *I* said nothink, Sir!

Pompilia. Oh, what *does* it matter? Give me the paper, Papa. (*She snatches it.*) Oh, listen to this:—"The number of solutions sent in was five hundred thousand, which means that twenty-five thousand pounds remain for division. The only competitor who gave the correct solution was Mr. Robert Conkling, of Linoleum Lodge, Camberwell . . ." *Oh!* Why, that's *you*, Robert!

Robert. Yes, Miss, I told you I said "Nothink," Miss. I'm sure if I'd thought——

Mr. S. (*gasping*). Twenty-five thousand pounds! Ah, Robert, I trust you will not forget that this piece of—ah—unmerited good fortune was acquired by you under this humble roof. Shake hands, my boy!

Pompilia. Wait, Papa—don't shake hands till I've done—(*continuing*)—"Mr. Conkling, however, having elected to disregard our conditions, requiring the solution to be written out in full, and to express the word "Nought" by a cipher, we cannot consider him legally entitled to the prize——"

Mr. S. How dare you use my private address for your illiterate attempts, Sir?

Pris. (*seizing the paper*). Why don't you read it all?——"We are prepared, nevertheless, to waive this informality, and a cheque for the full amount of twenty-five thousand pounds, payable to his order, will be forwarded to Mr. Conkling accordingly——"

Mr. S. Well, Robert, you deserve it, I must say—shake hands!—I—ah—*mean* it.

Robert. Thankee, Sir, I'm sure—it was Cook and Jane 'elped me, Sir, but—(*dolefully*)—I sold my chanst to the butcher-boy, for tuppence and a mouth-orgin, Sir.

Mr. S. You unspeakable young idiot! But there, you will know better another time; and now go out at once, and order five hundred copies of *Tiddler*—a periodical which offers such intellectual and—ah—substantial advantages, deserves some encouragement. (*Exit* Robert.) Now Mother, Parmenas, girls—all of you, let us set to work, and see—just for the—ah—fun of the thing—if we can't be more fortunate with the *next* competition. We'll have Cook and Jane, and—ah—Robert in to help; the housework can look after itself for once . . . what is it *now*, Priscilla?

Pris. (*faintly*). I've just seen this. (*Reads.*) "In consequence of the recent decision at Bow Street, those who send solutions for this,

and any future competitions, will not be required to forward any remittance with their coupons ——"

Mr. S. (*approvingly*). An admirable arrangement—puts a stop at once to any pernicious tendency to—ah—speculation!

Prisc. (*continuing*)—"and successful competitors must, we fear, be content with no other reward than that of honourable mention."

Mr. S. Here, send after Robert, somebody! It's scandalous that the precious time of a whole family should be frittered away in these unedifying and—ah—idiotic competitions. I will not allow another *Tiddler* to enter my house!

Robert (*entering with his arms full of "Tiddlers"*). Please, Sir, I brought a 'undred, Sir, and they'll send up the rest as soon as ever they—— Oh Lor, Sir, I on'y done as I was told, Sir!

[*He is pounced upon, severely cuffed by a righteously indignant family, and sent flying in a whirlwind of tattered "Tiddlers," as the Scene closes.*

LAYS OF MODERN HOME.

THE MUFFIN MAN.

Ah! welcome, through autumnal mist,
For each returning ruralist,
Waif metropolitan, to list
Thy tinkle unto.
No sound of seas or bees or trees
Can Londoners so truly please—
The cheapest epicure with ease
Thy dainties run to.

They need not, like the fruits on sticks,
The fruits Venetian boyhood licks,
A voice with operatic tricks
Their praise to trumpet.
The simple bell shall, fraught with sense
Of teapot, urn, and hearth intense,
Best herald thee and thy commens-urable crumpet.

Lives there a cit with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said,
"This is my crisp, my native-bred,
My British muffin!"?
Let picturesque Autolyci
Their cloying foreign dainties cry;
I don't see much to buy, not I,
Such messy stuff in!

Mysterious vagrant, dost prepare
Thyself that inexpensive fare;
Thyself, partake of it—and *where?*—
The boon thou sellest?
'Tis Home, where'er it be; thy load
Can cheer the pauper's dark abode,
And lack of it, with gloom corrode
The very swellest.

There are who deem it vulgar fun
For dressy bachelors to run
Themselves to stop thee; I'm not one
So nicely silly:
I'm not ashamed to track thy way,
And test the triumphs of thy tray,
And bring them back in paper, say,
To Piccadilly.

Yes, heedless of a gibing town,
To hand them Phyllis, sit me down,
And wait, till they come up in brown
And glossy sections.
Then, brew my cup—the best Ceylon—
And, bidding care and chill begone,
Concentre heart and mouth upon
Thy warm perfections.

MONTECARLOTTERY.

[It remains true that for those who want a brief and exhilarating change, and are glad to reap for the nonce the harvest of a quiet eye, there are spots within the borders of England which, both in climate and in scenery, can vie with the proudest and most vaunted watering-places of the Sunny South."—*Daily Paper.*]

Damon on the Riviera, to Pythias at Torquay.—"Here I am, by the blue Mediterranean! At least, the attendant of the sleeping-car says the Mediterranean is somewhere about, only, as a violent rain-storm is going on, we can't see it. Very tired by journey. Feel that, after all, you were probably right in deciding to try the coast of Devonshire this winter, instead of Riviera."

Pythias at Torquay, to Damon at Nice.—"Coast of Devonshire delightful, so far. Pleasant run down from London by G. W. R.—only five hours. Thought of and pitied your crossing to Calais, and long night-and-day journey after. You should just see our geraniums and fuchsias, growing out-of-doors in winter! Mind and tell me in your next how the olives and orange-trees look."

Damon to Pythias.—"Olives all diseased—have not seen an orange-tree yet—there is my reply to the query in your last. Hitherto I have not had much opportunity of seeing anything, as the mistral has been blowing, and it has been rather colder than England in March. Wretched cold in my head. No decent fires—only pine-cones and logs to burn, instead of coal! Wish I were at Torquay with you!"

Pythias to Damon.—"Sorry to hear that Riviera is such a failure. More pleased than ever with Devonshire. Glorious warm sunshine to-day. Natives say they hardly ever have frost. Children digging on sand on Christmas Eve—too hot for great-coat. Rain comes down occasionally, but then it dries up in no time. Quite a little Earthly Paradise. Glad I found it out."

Later from Damon.—"Riviera better. Mistral gone. Sun warm, and have seen my first orange-tree. Have also found that there's a place called Monte Carlo near Nice. Have you ever heard of it? There's a Casino there, where they have free concerts. Off there now!"

Later from Pythias.—"After all, Devonshire is sometimes a little damp. Yes, I *have* heard of Monte Carlo Casino, and I wish there was anything of the sort at Torquay. Walks and drives pretty, but monotonous. Hills annoying. Still, evidently far superior to any part of Riviera."

Still later from Damon.—"Glorious place, Monte Carlo. Superb grounds! Scenery lovely, and Casinery still lovelier! And, between ourselves, I have already more than paid for expenses of my trip by my winnings at the Tables. No time for more just now. Must back the red!"

Reply to above from Pythias.—"Very sorry to hear you have been playing at the Tables. Sure to end in ruin. By the bye, what system do you use? The subject interests me merely as a mathematical problem, of course. Wish *I* could pay expenses of my Devonshire hotel so easily. But then one ought to have *some* reward for visiting such a dreary place as the Riviera, with its Mistrals, and diseased olive-trees, and all that."

Latest from Damon.—"Since writing my last letter, my views of the Riviera have altered. The climate, I find, does not suit me. Sun doesn't shine as much as I expected—not at night, for instance. Then the existence of an olive disease anywhere near is naturally very *dégoûtant* (as they say here). And the Casino at Monte Carlo is simply an organised swindle. It ought to be put down! After staking ten times in succession on "Zero," and doubling my stake each time, I was absolutely cleared out! Only just enough money to take me home. Shall follow your example, and try Torquay for the rest of the winter."

Latest from Pythias.—"Just a hasty line to say—*don't* come to Torquay! I am leaving it. Since I last wrote, my views of Devonshire have also altered. Can't conceal from myself that the climate is a mistake. Damp, dull, and depressing. Your account of Monte Carlo—*not* the Casino, of course—so enchanting, that I've determined to try it. Just off to London to catch '*train de luxe!*'"

THE MISSING WORD.

(*By a much-badgered Barmaid.*)

Each beobyish bar-lounger calls me "dear,"
And "Misses" me in manner most absurd.
I should not miss *him!* But the boss, I fear,
Would miss his custom; so I still must hear
His odious "Miss-ing" word!
But oh! I'd sooner bear a monkey's kisses,
Than some of these cheap mashers' mincing "Misses"! ["two d"
And there is one young ape!—I'd stand
Could I hit him each time he "Misses" me!

QUEER QUERIES.

Autobiographical.—I should be glad to know whether it would be advisable for me to write a book of "Reminiscences," as I see is now the fashion. My life has been chiefly passed in a moorland-village in Yorkshire, so that it has not been very eventful, and I have never written anything before; still the public might like to hear my opinions on things in general, and I think I could make the anecdote of how our kitchen chimney once caught fire—which would be the most important incident chronicled—rather thrilling. Among interesting and eminent persons I have met, and of whom I could give some account in my forthcoming work, are Mr. Gladstone (who passed through our station in a train going at fifty miles an hour while I was on the platform), Lord Salisbury whom I met (under similar circumstances, and the back of whose head I feel confident that I actually saw) and the Lord Chief Justice of England, who ordered an Usher to remove me from his Court at the Assizes as I was (incorrectly) alleged to be snoring. I should be glad to hear of any leading Publisher who would be likely to offer a good price for such a book.—Rusticus Expectans.

Notes.

PRIVATE THEATRICALS. A REHEARSAL.

The Captain. "At this stage of the proceedings I've got to Kiss you, Lady Grace. Will your Husband mind, do you think?"
Lady Grace. "Oh no! It's for a *Charity*, you know!"

"CHRISTMAS IS COMING!"

"Christmas is coming!" Pleasant truth
To all—save the dyspeptic!
To most in whom some smack of youth
Hath influence antiseptic.
Pessimists prate, and prigs be-rate
The time of mirth and holly;
But why should time-soured sages "slate"
The juvenile and jolly?
"Though some churls at our mirth repine"
(As old George Wither put it),
We'll whiff our weed, and sip our wine,
And watch the youngsters foot it.
They did so in quaint Wither's time,
When wassail-bowls were humming,
And still girls laugh, and church-bells chime,
Because—"Christmas is coming!"

"Christmas is coming!" Let him bring
Mirth to the toiling million.
What is 't he bears—a gracious thing—
Behind him on the pillion?
Her snowy garb, and smile benign,
Make sunshine in dark places;
The gentlest, rarest, most divine
Of all the Christian graces.
Her eyes are full of loving light,
Her hands with gifts are laden;
True Yule-tide Almoner, of right,
This *Una*-pure sweet maiden!
She smiles on all, full-feeding mirth,
Young love, mad motley mumming;
There is less dearth of joy on earth,
Because—"Christmas is coming!"

A Merry Christmas? Round each room
That's writ in leaf and berry;
But there be those, alas! to whom
There's mockery in the "Merry."
Merry?—when sorrow loads the heart,
And nothing loads the larder?
In the world's play the poor man's part
At Yule-tide seems yet harder.
Good cheer to him who hungry goes,
And mirth to her who sorrows,
Lend bitter chill to Christmas snows.
Small joy care's bondsman borrows.
From jollity he may not share,
Despair is darkly drumming
At his dull breast, whose hearth won't flare,
Because—"Christmas is coming!"

Good Greybeard Sire, you would not tire
Gay youth with tales of trouble;
World-gladness is your heart's desire,
And so you're—riding double!
Pleasant to see dear Charity
Close pillion-poised behind you,
Eager to bid her gifts fly free,
We're happy so to find you.
Ride on, and scatter largesse wide!
Sore need is still no rarity,
For all our Progress, Power, and Pride,
We can't dispense with Charity.
Ride on, kind pair, and may the air
With happiness be humming,
And poverty shake off despair,
Because—"Christmas is coming!"

Rather too Premature.—We see "*Christmas Leaves*" advertised everywhere in glaring colours. This announcement is too early. "*Christmas Comes*," it should be, and then, any time after the 25th, will be appropriate for the announcement of his departure.

THE PORTER'S SLAM.

[A meeting at Manchester has raised a protest against the nuisance caused by the needless, loud "slamming" of railway carriage doors.]

The porter has a patent "slam,"
Which smites one like a blow,
And everywhere that porter comes,
That "slam" is sure to go.
It strikes upon the tym-pa-num
Like shock of dynamite;
By day it nearly makes you dumb—
It deafens you at night.
When startled by that patent "slam,"
The pious pas-sen-jare,
Says something else that ends in "am,"
(Or he has patience rare.)
Not only does it cause a shock,
But—Manchester remarks—
"Depreciates the rolling stock."
Well, that is rather larks!
That's not the point. The porter's slam
Conduces to insanity,
And, though as mild as Mary's lamb,
Drives men to loud profanity.
If Manchester the "slam" can stay
By raising of a stir,
All railway-travellers will say,
"Bully for Man-ches-ter!"

Kelly's Directory for 1893.—Invaluable, and considered as "portable property" (to quote *Pip's* friend), admirably suited for the pocket of any individual who should happen to be about twenty-five feet high. *How to use it?* Why—see inside—it is full of "Directions."

"CHRISTMAS IS COMING!"

MIXED NOTIONS.—No. II. UGANDA.

SCENE—*As before, a Railway-carriage in a suburban morning train to London. Persons also as before—namely, two* Well-informed Men, *an* Inquirer, *and an* Average Man.

First Well-informed Man (*laying down his paper*). So the Government's going to stick to Uganda, after all. I had a notion, from the beginning, they wouldn't be allowed to scuttle.

Average Man. Ah—I don't know that I'm particularly enthusiastic about Uganda.

Inquirer. Why not?

A. M. What are we going to get out of it?—that's the question. We go interfering all over the world, grabbing here, and grabbing there, merely in order to keep other people out; and then some nigger King, with a cold in his head, sneezes as he passes the Union Jack. That's an insult to the flag, of course; so off goes an expedition, and, before you know where you are, we've spent about ten millions, and added a few thousand acres of swamp to the Empire. Why can't we leave things alone? Haven't we got enough?

First W. I. M. That's all very well, I daresay; but you forget that the Berlin Conference made Uganda one of our spheres of influence.

Inquirer. When was that?

First W. I. M. Why, just after the Franco-Prussian War. They all met in Berlin to settle up everything—and we got Uganda.

Inquirer. I thought it was later than that, somehow.

First W. I. M. Well, anyhow, it was somewhere about that time. I don't pledge myself to a year or two. But what I say about Uganda is this. We're there—or rather the Company is—and we should simply disgrace ourselves before the whole world if we chucked up the sponge now. And, if we did, we should have France or Germany nipping in directly.

Second W. I. M. They can't.

First W. I. M. Why not?

Second W. I. M. Why not! Because it's our sphere of influence whatever happens.

Inquirer (*timidly*). I'm afraid you'll think me very ignorant, but I don't quite know what a "sphere of influence" is. I've read a lot about it lately, but I can't quite make it out.

Second W. I. M. (*condescendingly*). Yes, I know it's deuced difficult to keep up with these new notions, unless you're in the way of hearing all about them. Spheres of influence mean—well, don't you know, they mean some country that's not quite yours, but it's more yours than anybody else's, and if anybody else comes into it, you're allowed to make a protocol of it. Besides, it gives you a right to the Hinterland, you know.

Inquirer (*dubiously*). Ah, I see. What's the Hinterland?

Second W. I. M. (*stumped*). I fancy it's about the most fertile part of Africa. (*To First W. I. M.*) Isn't it?

First W. I. M. Yes, that's it. It's the German for Highlands.

Inquirer. Of course, so it is. I might have thought of that.

Average Man (*to First W. I. M.*). Seems to me you've none of you got hold of the right point. What I want to know is, does Uganda pay? LUGARD says it don't; the Company hasn't made anything of it, and they've got to go whether they like it or not; though I daresay they're deuced glad to be out of the hole. But, if it don't pay, what on earth are we going to do with it?

Second W. I. M. (*triumphantly reinforcing him*). Yes, what on earth are we to do with it?

First W. I. M. (*calmly, but contemptuously*). Ah! I see you're both little-England men. From your point of view, I daresay you're right enough. But I'm one of those who believe that we must stick on wherever we've planted the flag. I agree with MOLTKE, that the nation that gives up is in a state of decay.

Second W. I. M. It wasn't MOLTKE who said that; it was VICTOR HUGO, or (*after a pause*) Lord PALMERSTON.

First W. I. M. Well, it doesn't matter who said it. The point is, it's true. Besides, what are you going to do about the slaves and the Missionaries?

Average Man. Oh, bother the Missionaries!

First W. I. M. It's all very well to say "bother the Missionaries!" but that won't get you any further. They're our fellow-creatures after all, and what's more, they're our fellow-countrymen, so we've got to look after them.

Average Man. I should let the whole lot of Missionaries fight it out together. They only keep quarrelling amongst themselves, and trying to bag one another's converts; and then France and England get involved.

Inquirer. By the way, where is Uganda, exactly?

First W. I. M. Just behind Zanzibar — or somewhere about there. You can get to it best from Mashonaland. Didn't you see that RHODES said he was going to make a telegraph-line through there? It used to belong to the SULTAN OF ZANZIBAR. Don't you remember?

Inquirer. Of course; so it did.

[*Train draws up at Terminus.*

A SALVE FOR THE CONSCIENCE.

Vegetarian Professor. "NO, MADAM, NOT EVEN FISH. I CANNOT SANCTION THE DESTRUCTION OF LIFE. THESE LITTLE ANIMALS, FOR INSTANCE, WERE BUT YESTERDAY SWIMMING HAPPILY IN THE SEA."

Mrs. O'Laughlan. "OH BUT, PROFESSOR, JUST THINK IT'S THE FIRST TIME THE POOR LITTLE THINGS HAVE EVER BEEN REALLY WARM IN THEIR LIVES!"

"'TWAS WHISPERED IN HEAVEN, 'TWAS MUTTERED IN H——." *A propos* of the much-discussed article written by Dr. ST. GEORGE MIVART in *The Nineteenth Century*, on "Happiness in Hell,"—begging pardon for uttering a word "unmentionable to ears polite,"—our old friend 'ARRY writes thusly:—"Sir,—We 'ave all of us been familiar for years with the well-known 'Mivart's 'Otel.' If the clever Professor is correct, this name ought to be changed, as there ain't no such a place; and, in future, when alluded to, it ought to be called *Mivart's Cool 'el*. Am I right?

"Yours truly, THE 'ARRY OPAGITE."

IN "Lucky Shoes," baskets, and in other dainty trifles, does RIMMEL arrange his beautiful bottles of scent. RIMMEL is not a Head Centre, but our Chief Scenter, "and," exclaims Mr. WAGSTAFF, the Unabashed, "what a great day will be his Scentenary!"

"THE SILENT BATTLE."—See this charming piece at the Criterion. Of course it is brought out by Mr. CHARLES WYNDHAM in illustration of the old proverb, "*Acts, not words.*"

HAPPY AND NOVEL COMBINATION! THE HARMONIOUS CHRISTMAS "PARTY."

CHOOSING CHRISTMAS TOYS.

(*A Sketch in the Lowther Arcade.*)

Between the sloping banks of toys, and under a dense foliage of coloured rosettes, calico banners, and Japanese-lanterns, the congested Stream of Custom oozes slowly along, with an occasional overflow into the backwaters of the shops behind, while the Stall-keepers keep up a batrachian and almost automatic croak of invitation.

Fond Grandmother. So you've chosen a box of soldiers, have you, FRANKY? — very well. Now what shall we get for little ELSIE and Baby?

Franky (*promptly*). Another box of soldiers would do nicely for ELSIE, Grandmamma, and — *I* know, a fort for Baby!

Grandm. (*doubtfully*). But they're such *little* tots — they won't know how to play with them.

Franky. Oh, but I can *teach* them, you know, Grandmamma.

Grandm. That's right —I like to see a boy kind to his little sisters.

[*She adopts* Master FRANKY'S *disinterested suggestion.*

A Mother. Now, PERCY, it's all nonsense —you *can't* want any more toys—those you've got are as good as new. (*To her Friend.*) He's such a boy for taking care of his things—he'll hardly trust his toys out of their boxes, and won't allow anyone else to *touch* them!

The Friend. Dear little fellow—then I'm sure he *deserves* to be given a new toy for being so careful!

The Mother. Well, he'll give me no peace till I *do* give him something, I know—but mind this, PERCY, it's only to keep you quiet, and I'm not going to buy EDDIE anything. (*To Friend.*) He gives all *his* things away as it is!

[Master PERCY *takes both these valuable moral lessons to heart.*

Mrs. Stilton (*to her less prosperous Sister-in-law,* Mrs. BLOOMOLD). Nonsense, VINNIE, I won't *hear* of it! REGGIE has more toys already than he knows what to do with!

Mrs. Bloom. (*apologetically*). Of course, my dear SOPHIA, I know your children are born to every——but still, I have no one but myself *now*, you know—and if I *might*—it would be such a *pleasure!*

"Er—I want a Toy of some sort—for a *Child*, don', you know!"

Mrs. Stilton. I have already told you there is not the slightest occasion for your spending your money in any such foolish manner. I hope that is enough.

Mrs. Bloom. I'm sure he would like one of these little water-carts—now *wouldn't* you, REGGIE? [REGGIE *assents shyly.*

Mrs. Stilton. Buy him one, by all means—he will probably take the colour out of my new carpets with it—but, of course, *that's* of no consequence to *you!*

Mrs. Bloom. Oh dear, I *quite* forgot your beautiful carpets. No, to be sure, that might——but one of those little butcher's shops, now!—they're really *quite* cheap!

Mrs. S. I always thought cheapness was a question of what a person could *afford*.

Mrs. Bloom. But I *can* afford it, dear SOPHIA—thanks to dear JOHN'S bounty, and—and *yours*.

Mrs. S. You mustn't thank *me*. *I* had nothing to do with it. I warned JOHN at the time that it would only——and it seems I was right. And REGGIE has a butcher's shop—a really good one—already. In fact, I couldn't tell you what he *hasn't* got!

Reggie. I can, though, Aunt VINNIE. I haven't got a train, for *one* thing! (*To his Mother, as she drags him on.*) I *should* like a little tin train, to go by clockwork on rails so. Do let Auntie——what's she staying behind for?

Mrs. Bloom. (*catching them up, and thrusting a box into* REGGIE'S *hands*). There, dear boy, there's your train — with Aunt VINNIE'S love! (REGGIE *opens the box, and discovers a wooden train.*) What's the matter, darling? Isn't it——?

Mrs. S. He had rather set his heart on a clock-work one with rails—which I was thinking of getting for him — but I am sure he's very much obliged to his Aunt all the same — *aren't* you, REGINALD?

Reggie (*with a fortunate inspiration*). Thank you *ever* so much, Auntie! And I like this train better than a tin one—because all the doors open really—it's *exactly* what I wanted!

Mrs. S. That's so like REGGIE—he never says anything to hurt people's feelings if he can possibly help it.

Mrs. B. (*with meek ambiguity*). Ah, dear SOPHIA, you set him such an *example*, you see!

[REGGIE *wonders why she squeezes his hand so.*

A Vague Man (*to Saleswoman*). Er—I want a toy of some sort—for a *child*, don't you know. (*As if he might require it for an elderly person.*) At least, it's not *exactly* a child—it can *talk*, and all that.

Salesw. Will you step inside, Sir? We've a large assortment within to select from. Is it for a boy or a girl?

The Vague Man. It's a boy—that is, its name's EVELYN — of course, that's a girl's name too; but it had better be some thing that doesn't — I mean something it can't——

[*He runs down.*

Salesw. I *quite* understand, Sir. One of these little 'orses and carts are a very nice present for a child—(*with languid commendation*)—the little 'orse takes out and all.

The V. M. Um—yes—but I want something more—a different *kind* of thing altogether.

Salesw. We sell a great many of these rag-dolls; all the clothes take off and on.

The V. M. Isn't that rather——and then, for a boy, eh?

Salesw. P'raps a box of wooden soldiers *would* be a more suitable toy for a boy, certainly.

The V. M. Soldiers, eh?—yes—but you see, it might turn out to be a girl after all—and then——

Saleswo. I see, you want something that would do equally well for either. *Here's* a toy now. (*She brings out a team of little tin swans on wheels.*) You fix a stick in the end—so—and wheel it in front of you, and all the little swans go up and down.

[*She wheels it up and down without enthusiasm.*

The V. M. (*inspecting it feebly*). Oh—the swans go up and down, eh? It isn't quite—but very likely it won't—May as well have that as something else—Yes, you can send it to—let me see—is it Hampstead or Notting Hill they're living at now? (*To the* Saleswoman, *who naturally cannot assist him.*) No, of course, *you* wouldn't know. Never mind, I'll take it with me—don't trouble to wrap it up!

[*He carries it off—to forget it promptly in a hansom.*

A Genial Uncle (*entering with Nephews and Nieces*). Plenty to choose from here, eh? Look about and see what you'd like best.

Jane (*the eldest, sixteen, and "quite a little woman"*). I'm sure they would much rather *you* chose for them, Uncle!

Uncle. Bless me, *I* don't know what boys and girls like nowadays—they must choose for themselves!

Saleswo. (*wearily*). Perhaps one of the young gentlemen would like a dredging-machine? The handle turns, you see, and all the little buckets go round the chain and take up sand or mud—or there's a fire-engine, *that's* a nice toy, throws a stream of real water.

[TOMMY, *aged eleven, is charmed with the dredging-machine, while the fire-engine finds favour in the eyes of* BOBBY, *aged nine.*

Jane (*thoughtfully*). I'm afraid the dredging-machine is rather a *messy* toy, Uncle, and the fire-engine wouldn't do at all, either—it would be sure to encourage them to play with fire. BOBBY, if you say "blow!" once more, I shall tell Mother. Uncle is the best judge of what's suitable for you!

Uncle. Well, there's something in what you say, JENNY. We must see if we can't find something better, that's all.

Saleswo. I've a little Toy-stige, 'ere—with scenes and characters in "*Richard Cured o' Lyin'*" complete and ready for acting—how would that do?

[TOMMY *and* BOBBY *cheer up visibly at this suggestion.*

Jane. I *don't* think Mother would like them to have *that*, Uncle—it might give them a *taste* for theatres, you know!

Uncle. Ha—so it might—very thoughtful of you, JANE—Mustn't get in your Mother's bad books; never do! What's in these boxes? soldiers? How about these, eh, boys? [*The boys are again consoled.*

Jane (*gently*). They're getting *rather* too big for such babyish things as soldiers, Uncle! I tell you what *I* think—if you got a nice puzzle-map for TOMMY—he's so backward in his Geography—and a drawing-slate for BOBBY, who's getting on so nicely with his drawing, and a little work-box—not an *expensive* one, of course—for WINNIE, that would be *quite*——

[*These sisterly counsels are rewarded by ungrateful and rebellious roars.*

Uncle. TOMMY, did I hear you address your sister as a "beast"? Come—come! And what are you all turning on the waterworks for, eh? Strikes me, JANE, you haven't *quite* hit off their tastes!

Jane (*virtuously*). I have only told you what I know Mother would *wish* them to have, Uncle; and, even if I *am* to have my ankles kicked for it, I'm sure I'm right!

Uncle. Always a consolation, my dear JENNY. I'm sure no nephew of *mine* would kick his sister, except by the merest accident—so let's say no more of that. But it's no use getting 'em what they don't like; so suppose we stick to the fire-engine, and the other concern—theatre is it, JOHNNY?—Very well—and don't you get *me* into trouble over 'em, that's all. And WINNIE would like a doll, eh?—that's all right. Now everybody's provided for—except JANE!

Jane (*frostily*). Thank you, Uncle—but you seem to forget I'm not *exactly* a child! [*She walks out of the shop with dignity.*

Uncle. Hullo! Put my foot in it again! But we can't leave JENNY out of it—*can we?* Must get her a present of some sort over the way . . . Here, TOMMY, my boy, you can tell me something she'd like.

Bobby (*later—to* TOMMY). What did you tell Uncle to get for JANE?

Tommy (*with an unholy chuckle*). Why, a box with one of those puff-things in it. Don't you know how we caught her powdering her nose with Mother's? And Uncle *got* her one too! *Won't* she be shirty just!

[*They walk out in an ecstasy of anticipation, as Scene closes.*

MR. PUNCH's Paragraphist says, "he was never good at dates," not even when served in dishes, for they're dry at the best; but, of the very newest and best kind of Date Cards, MARCUS WARD & Co. have a capital selection. Among them the *Grandfather's Clock* makes a pretty screen, and, being a clock, is, of course, always up to the time of day.

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

THE Baron's Diarist and Date Examiner makes the following exhaustive notes:—first that Mr. C. LETTS describes some of his *Pocket Diaries* as "The Improved." There is nothing so good but what it could be better. Lett's admit this, and be satisfied with the latest edition of Letts' Annuals, which are prizes, though, until Jan. 1, blanks.

* * * * * *

The Paradise of the North, by DAVID LAWSON JOHNSTONE. When a gentleman chooses the North Pole as a Paradise, he must be allowed any amount of Latitude and Longitude. This explorer leaves his CHAMBERS (the Publishers of that ilk) in order to get out of the world by the coldest route.

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A note on INNES & Co. "Innes" has several Outs this season. Cheery name for a Christmas Publisher, "Innes." We take our ease at our Innes, and we read with pleasure their dainty books called, *Bartlemy's Child*, by FRANCES COMPTON, a very pretty story. L. B. WALFORD (the authoress of *Mr. Smith*) condescends to write *For Grown-Up Children*, a number of delightful tales.

* * * * * *

Messrs. OSGOOD as good as ever. Why not follow up their *Bret Harte Birthday Book* (most Harte-tistically got up) with a *Sweet-Heart Birthday Book?* Madame VAN DE VELDE has compiled this. Our sparklingest Baronite exclaims, "Velde done!"

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Thanks to MARCUS WARD & Co. for *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, by ROBBIE BURNS. "Oh, wad some friend the giftie gi'e us!"—as anyone who would like this for a Christmas present may say, adapting the poet to his purpose.

The Baron and his Christmas Books.

"A most sweet story! A most charming story!!" gurgled the Baron, as, with sobs in his inner voice, talking to himself, he finished the penultimate chapter of *Dolly*. "Now, Mrs. BURNETT, if you dare to kill your heroine, I swear I'll never forgive you, and never read another of your fatally-fascinating books." The Baron trembled as he commenced the last chapter of the simplest, most natural, most touching, and most exquisitely-told story he has read for many a day. How would it end? A few lines sufficed. "Bless you, Mrs. BURNETT!" snivelled the Baron, not ashamed of dabbing his eyes with his kerchief. "Bless you, Ma'am! You have let 'em live! May your new book go to countless editions! May it be another *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, and may you reap a golden reward for this, your masterpiece of simple work, your latest story—*Dolly!*" The Baron is bound ("bound in morocco" as the slaves were, poor wretches!) to add that he wishes it had not been illustrated, for, as good wine needs no bush, so a perfect story, such as is this, needs no illustration; nay, is rather injured by it than not. There is only one small item of common-place in it, and that is making the would-be seducer a married man. Of course, to prove him so was the easiest and shortest way of saving his vain and feather-headed little victim. Perhaps an alternative would have involved complication, and might have marred the natural simplicity of the story. So critically the Baron states his one very small objection, and reverts with the utmost pleasure to the hours he spent over the tale, absorbed in every page, in every line of it; and herewith doth he, not only most strongly, but most earnestly recommend everyone to procure this book (published by E. WARNE & Co.), for it is one that can be and must be given a place of honour by the side of DICKENS and THACKERAY, to be read again and again, here a bit and there a bit, when other works of fiction now enjoying a greater literary reputation (though 'twould be difficult to name them), shall be relegated to the lowest shelves of books that have had their day. "*Dixi! Scripsi!*" quoth THE LEARNED BARON DE BOOK-WORMS.

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THE PIPE IN THE WORKHOUSE.—The picture drawn by our Helper of the poor old man in the workhouse, puffing away at an empty pipe, has touched the hearts of some of our correspondents. One who dates from the High Alps, and signs himself "Old Screw," says: "I have been struck with your suggestion in the October number of the REVIEW OF REVIEWS for a scheme to supply smokers in union workhouses with tobacco. I am afraid, judged by the ordinary standards, I am the most selfish of mortals, as I never give a cent away for purposes of so-called charity; but this scheme of yours appeals at once to the sympathies of a hardened and inveterate smoker. Were I in London, I would at once start a collecting-box for the fund, and levy contributions for it on my smoking acquaintances, but, unfortunately, my business compels me to be a wanderer round the Continent for the next nine months. I can, however, do a little, and would like to contribute a pound of what I consider the BEST SMOKING TOBACCO, viz., 'PLAYER'S NAVY CUT' (this is not an advertisement). I disclose, therefore, a cheque for the amount."

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